

## TAKE A CLEANER HOUSECLEANING APPROACH

The City of San Diego Household Hazardous Materials Program

**S**an Diego consumers have grown accustomed to dozens of products that make household chores easier but at what impact to our environment? We now have separate cleaners for almost every task, from wiping down the tile to scrubbing the deck.

These products can be used and stored safely. However, many of them contain substances that can be hazardous to health and the environment without proper safeguards — and many of the leftovers from these products can't be thrown in the trash but must be taken to a household hazardous waste collection event.

You can become a smarter “home environmentalist” and save money by knowing a few guidelines about shrewd purchasing, safer alternatives to more toxic products, proper storage and disposal. These include:

- **Read the label before you buy.** Words such as CAUTION, POISON, TOXIC, FLAMMABLE, CORROSIVE, and REACTIVE mean you should take care in selection and use. Seek the least hazardous of those products available. The words CAUTION, WARNING, and DANGER indicate the strength of the cleaner. Products that say CAUTION are generally less risky than those marked WARNING; which, in turn, are less risky than those marked DANGER.
- **Limit variety.** Selecting all-purpose products rather than those that are job-specific lessens the amount of hazardous materials used and stored in your home, and saves you money.
- **Limit quantity.** Buy only what you need and can use in a reasonable amount of time. JUMBO SIZE containers of little-used products can result in jumbo amounts of hazardous waste. Larger sizes also take more room, cost more money and increase the potential for hazards such as spills or fires around the house.
- **Read the label before use.** Some chemicals in cleaners may be hazardous to your health during routine use. Avoid exposure by following label directions regarding safe use. Wear appropriate gloves and other safety apparel, and use the products in a well-ventilated area.



### Active Ingredients In Household Cleaners

**S**ome of the most common active ingredients in household cleaners are hazardous chemicals, including the following:

**Acids** are corrosive and can be found in rust removers, tub and toilet bowl cleaners. Examples are phosphoric acid and sulfuric acid. Vinegar is a weaker acid that is less corrosive to skin and metal fixtures and is a safer alternative to some cleaners.



**Bleaches**, such as sodium hypochlorite, are reactive oxidizers that produce a “whitening” effect. Oxidizers can react violently with other substances and thus can be dangerous when spilled or mixed with other cleaners. Bleaches must be safely stored according to label directions. Do not mix bleach and ammonia, which together can produce deadly toxic gases.

**Caustic or alkaline substances** are corrosive and include lye, ammonia, sodium carbonate and washing soda. Trisodium phosphate (TSP) is in this category but is mildly corrosive when appropriately diluted for most cleaning uses. Baking soda is slightly alkaline but not corrosive to skin.

**Solvents**, which are liquids that carry active ingredients, are found in spot removers, polishes, some rug cleaners and degreasers and are often flammable. The smartest choices are water-based, since water is the safest solvent. Soapy water is an excellent all-purpose cleaner.


### Some Safer Alternatives To Consider

**M**any individuals have tried and adopted “home made” cleaners that perform adequately and use the following less-toxic chemical ingredients: soap flakes, liquid soap, lemon juice, baking soda, hydrogen peroxide, or trisodium phosphate (TSP). Samples of these alternative cleaning recipes include:

- **All-purpose household cleaner:** mix 1 teaspoon liquid soap, 1 teaspoon TSP and 1 quart warm water.
- **Chlorine bleach:** use bleach with a hydrogen peroxide or peroxygen base.
- **Degreaser (kitchen):** mix 2 tablespoons TSP or liquid soap and 1 gallon water; or use non-chlorinated scouring powder, or scouring pad.

- **Disinfectant:** for surfaces, mix 1 oz. hydrogen peroxide-based or chlorine-based bleach and 1 gallon water.
- **Floor cleaner:** for vinyl, mix ½ cup vinegar and 1 gallon water; for wood, mix 1 teaspoon mild liquid soap and one gallon of water.
- **Furniture polish:** use plain mineral oil. It adds moisture and seals out water without the added perfumes and solvents of some polishes.
- **Glass cleaner:** mix ½ teaspoon liquid soap, 3 tablespoons vinegar and 2 cups water. Use in a spray bottle.
- **Mildew cleaner:** for mild cases, scrub with a paste made from baking soda and water; for severe cases, use TSP, and rinse only in food areas.
- **Scouring powder:** baking soda or a non-chlorinated commercial scouring powder.

Proper Disposal Of Household Cleaners



Throwing leftover household cleaners and other household hazardous wastes in the trash can endanger the environment and refuse collectors - and it's against the law! Take household hazardous wastes, including household cleaners, to a citywide household hazardous waste collection event.

For information on collection events, call the Household Hazardous Materials Program Hotline at **235-2111**. For information on used oil recycling options, call the Used Oil Infoline at **235-2105**.

Housecleaning Alternatives	
 <b>Thumbs Down</b> <i>(Avoid Exposure)</i>	 <b>Thumbs Up</b> <i>(Use More Often)</i>
Aerosols	Pump sprays
Chemical drain openers	Plunger or metal snake
Gasoline (as degreaser)	Water-based degreaser
Moth balls	Cedar chips or herbal sachets
No-pest strips	Fly paper, fly swatter
Rust remover	Steel wool

*Sponsored by*  
*The City of San Diego Environmental Services and Metropolitan Wastewater Departments and the California Integrated Waste Management Board.*



THE HOME ENVIRONMENT



TAKE A CLEANER  
HOUSECLEANING  
APPROACH

No. 2 OF A SERIES

The City of San Diego Household Hazardous Materials Program

Household Hazardous Materials

**Program Hotline..... 235-2111**  
*(All other areas)..... 1-(800) 246-1233*


**Used Oil Infoline..... 235-2105**

**Recycling Hotline: Paper, Glass, Cans..... 467-0903**  
*(All other areas)..... 1-(800) 237-2583*

**Paint for Graffiti Removal**

Paint Exchange Bank..... 527-3431  
*(All other areas)..... 1-(800) 246-1233*

**Health Information**



**Emergencies..... 911**

**Poison Control Center..... 543-6000**

Indoor Air Pollution:  
American Lung Association..... 297-3901

**Reporting Hazards**

Air Emissions:  
Air Pollution Control District..... 694-3340  
Oil-Burning, Smoking Vehicles..... 1-(800)-28-SMOKE

Illegal dumping of hazardous waste:  
County Dept. of Environmental Health..... 338-2284  
Storm Water Pollution Hotline..... 533-3793

Pesticides:  
County Agricultural Commissioner..... 694-2739  
Internet: [www.sannet.gov/environmental-services/](http://www.sannet.gov/environmental-services/)

The City of San Diego  
Household Hazardous Materials Program  
450 A Street, Suite 500  
San Diego, CA 92101

BULK RATE  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT #2365  
SAN DIEGO CA